

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application are respectfully solicited.

Claims 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, and 21 are pending, with Claims 3, 5, 10, 14, 16, and 21 being independent. Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, and 22 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 3, 5, 10, 14, 16, and 21 have been amended.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11 through 13, 15, 17, 19, and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 over U.S. Patent Nos. 6,177,914 B1 (Iwama, et al.), 6,429,836 B1 (Hansen), and 5,224,480 (Yamada, et al.). Claims 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 20, and 21 were objected to and indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. All rejections and objections are respectfully traversed, and are submitted to have been obviated by the cancellation without prejudice of the rejected claims, and the rewriting in independent form of the objected-to claims with minor editorial changes (e.g., “affect” has been changed to --effect--).

The dependent claims are also submitted to be patentable because they set forth additional aspects of the present invention and are dependent from independent claims discussed above. Therefore, separate and individual consideration of each dependent claim is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,

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